(b) The reason for unreleased amount during the year 2000-2001 was the non-receipt of adequate/complete proposals from the State Governments/UT Administrations/NGOs.

(c) The Ministry convened two different meetings on 13-14 July, 2001 and 27-2-2002 with State Secretaries/Ministers in-charge of Tribal Welfare Departments to impress upon them to send/ forward their own proposals as well as of the NGOs complete in all respects under various schemes which *inter-alia* included Vocational Training Centre. They were also advised that these proposals should be submitted along with the utilization certificates in respect of previous releases to enable processing of proposals faster. The officers from the Ministry were also deputed to visit various States/UTs frequently to explain various provisions of the scheme to the State Government functionaries to enable them to take advantage of the scheme.

Exploration of new market by TRIFED

3611. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether TRIFED has been exploring the possibilities of getting new markets at the national as well as international level for Non-Timber Forest Produces (NTFPs) procured by it;

(b) if so, how far TRIFED has been successful in this endeavour; and

(c) the fresh steps taken by Government to ensure scientific storage of NTFPs in order to increase shelf life of these products?

THE MINISTER OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JUAL ORAM) : (a) and (b) As reported by TRIFED, it has established 13 Regional Offices (including Tribes Shop in Delhi), 2 Field Offices, 4 permanent procurement centres and 1 permanent retail outlet, which besides procurement are also engaged in exploring marketing of NTFPs the major NTFP items procured from Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh are sold by the branches in Jagdalpur, Bhubaneshwar and Hyderabad by exploring the markets. At the international level, TRIFED exports NTFPs like Gum Karaya and Lac through its associate shippers to different parts of the world.

(c) Preservation of NTFP commodities in a scientific manner is a high priority with TRIFED. At present TRIFED hires the services of Central Warehousing Corporation/State Warehousing Corporation godowns and cold storages for preservation purposes to increase shelf life of the products.